

Message Text

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ORIGIN EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

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DRAFTED BY EB/TT/MA:REJOHE:BST

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

UNCLAS STATE 247224

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT

SUBJECT: ORINOCO SHIPPING COMPANY VESSEL ELISABETH
(EX-USN LSM)

1. DEPTOFF HAS HAD INQUIRY FROM MR. JAMES TALAMINI, A PARTNER IN THE ORINOCO SHIPPING COMPANY, RE POSSIBLE LOCATION OF ORINOCO VESSEL ELISABETH (EX-USN LSM) WHICH DISAPPEARED APPROXIMATELY THREE AND ONE-HALF YEARS AGO. FYI. ORINOCO IS A FIRM RUN BY TALAMINI FROM HIS PRIVATE RESIDENCE IN PATTERSON, NEW JERSEY. END FYI.

2. AS TALAMINI RELATES A SOMEWHAT SKETCHY STORY, THE ELISABETH, FLYING THE PANAMIAN FLAG AND CAPTAINED BY

A VENEZUELAN, DEPARTED MIAMI, FLORIDA, THREE AND ONE-HALF YEARS AGO DESTINED FOR VENEZUELA WITH A CARGO OF PAPER AND A CREW OF 12. THE VESSEL DISAPPEARED. A SEARCH BY U.S., VENEZUELAN AND PANAMIAN COAST GUARD PRODUCED NO RESULTS. FYI. DEPARTMENT HAS NOT ATTEMPTED TO VERIFY VALIDITY OF SEARCH. END FYI.

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3. WITHIN THE PAST THREE WEEKS, AN INFORMANT HAS TOLD

TALAMINI THAT HE IS 90 PERCENT CERTAIN THE ELISABETH IS THE VESSEL WHICH WAS RECENTLY SEIZED BY VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES FOR NARCOTICS VIOLATIONS AND IS NOW TIED UP AT PUERTO CABALLO.

4. TALAMINI STATES THAT ELISABETH'S ORIGINAL NAME, HOGSHIRE, WAS STAMPED IN THE HULL PLATING OF THE SHIP, AND IS PROBABLY THE BEST IDENTIFYING MARK IN THE EVENT THE NAME ELISABETH HAS BEEN REMOVED. THE LSM HAS THE PROFILE OF A SMALL WW II LST AND IS APPROXIMATELY 200 FEET IN LENGTH AND 34 FEET IN WIDTH. IT HAS A PROMINENT HIGH BOW AND MIDSHIP STACK AND BEACHES FOR LOADING. TALAMINI ALSO STATES HE HAS PAPERS TO SHOW THAT THE ELISABETH WAS PURCHASED BY ORINOCO FROM FEDERAL MARSHALLS IN MIAMI IN DECEMBER, 1970.

5. REQUEST EMBASSY VERIFY, IF POSSIBLE, THE PRESENCE OF THE ELISABETH AT PUERTO CABALLO. IF VESSEL IS LOCATED, REQUEST ANY INFORMATION DEPARTMENT CAN RELAY TO TALAMINI ON VESSEL RECOVERY PROCEDURES. INGERSOLL

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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